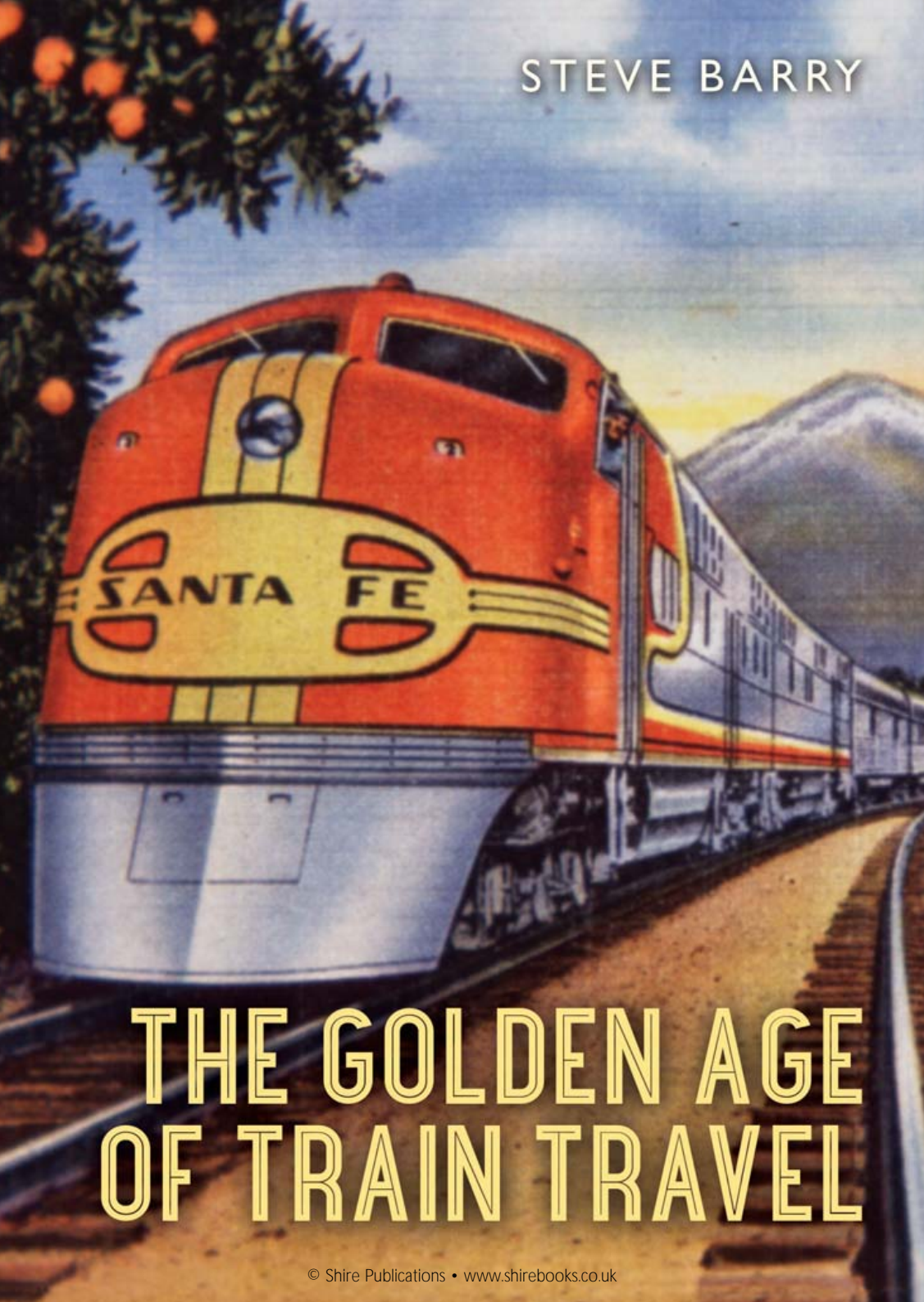


STEVE BARRY



THE GOLDEN AGE OF TRAIN TRAVEL

THE GOLDEN AGE OF TRAIN TRAVEL

Steve Barry



SHIRE PUBLICATIONS



CONTENTS

THE RISE OF THE RAILROADS	4
THE GOLDEN YEARS	16
THE STREAMLINED ERA	26
A RAPID DESCENT	38
REMNANTS AND REBIRTH	50
PLACES TO VISIT	62
FURTHER READING	63
INDEX	64

CHICAGO & ALTON RR



THE GREAT
PALACE RECLINING-CHAIR ROUTE
Between CHICAGO AND KANSAS CITY
CHICAGO AND ST. LOUIS AND
ST. LOUIS AND KANSAS CITY
FREE OF EXTRA CHARGE AND WITHOUT CHANGE

PALACE
DINING
CARS

PULLMAN
PALACE
Buffer &
Sleeping
CARS

THE RISE OF THE RAILROADS

THE MOST significant event in North American railroad history took place on May 10, 1869. On that date, the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads met at Promontory Summit, Utah, for the driving of the golden spike and the completion of the transcontinental railroad. With just a few blows from a spike maul, east and west were united by twin ribbons of steel. It also marked the day the US railroads moved from adolescence to maturity—they had vanquished the stagecoach and the canal—ending a mere four decades of whirlwind change. The American Civil War was over, and the nation and its railroads were entering a new era.

The build-up to this golden age is a remarkable story itself. Railroads were well established in Europe by 1830, but were hardly present in the new world. Freight railroads began to appear, tied to specific industries such as mining, but passenger travel remained the domain of the stagecoach and horse. It wasn't until the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad (B&O) was chartered in 1827 that the idea of a network of rails began to take shape. The B&O instituted passenger service in 1831 to the suburbs of Baltimore—initially it was horse drawn, and later steam powered. Railroad mileage in the United States quickly boomed. In 1830 only the B&O's 23 miles was built. By 1840 the mileage had increased to almost 3,000 and by 1850 it tripled to over 9,000 miles. It tripled again by 1860, with over 30,000 miles of track constructed. Due to the Civil War, it would take twenty years for mileage to triple again, with over 92,000 miles built by 1880. Another 100,000 miles would be in use by 1900. Passenger-miles would increase along with the track mileage, surpassing 7 billion by 1865 and reaching 16 billion in 1900.

Early passenger coaches were not much more than horse carriages mounted on flanged wheels. It was the B&O's Ross Winans, one of the great innovators of early railroad design, who came up with the double-truck passenger car. Two sets of four wheels, one set under each end of the car, allowed for longer coaches and smoothed out the ride. By 1840 most railroads had adopted what is still the basic standard design for a rail car.

Opposite:
Poster advertising
Chicago & Alton
Railroad, with route
map ingeniously
incorporated into
reclining chair
holding lady with
fan, c. 1885. Pullman
Palace buffet and
sleeping cars were
offered en route.



Golden Spike ceremony, May 10, 1869, joining the Union Pacific track with the Central Pacific line at Promontory, Utah, thus making transcontinental railroad travel across the US possible for the first time.

Other changes over the next twenty years included a clerestory roof that allowed additional light in the car and aided in circulating air. As railroad travel became more competitive, the cars became less utilitarian with each railroad embellishing its coaches to attract passengers. By 1855, railroads had reached the point where long-distance travel was possible, and to lure passengers the railroads started adding the first premium cars—diners, observation cars, lounges and more.

Early passenger trains featured no onboard amenities. At meal times trains stopped at stations equipped with dining halls, and passengers stayed in luxurious hotels overnight. Business travelers demanded faster service, though, and one way to achieve that was to keep the trains moving. Sleeping cars had been developed as early as 1830, but it was Theodore T. Woodruff who put the first fleet of cars in service in 1857. Unlike coaches, which were

owned by each railroad, sleeping cars were operated by independent companies, as these cars might travel over several different railroads on each journey. Other sleeping-car companies soon entered the market, although most of these companies had a very short life when one dominant company entered the field. Dining cars entered regular service on the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Railroad in 1862, although the food was prepared off the train.

When one thinks of rail travel, especially in the golden age, one does not think of pedestrian coaches, however. One thinks of the palatial first-class accommodations. To find the birth of those, one needs to go back to 1840 on the Camden & Amboy Railroad, when two coaches were equipped not with the standard wooden benches of the time, but with rocking chairs. Seat springs, upholstery and better protection from the outside elements (not only weather, but locomotive soot and sparks) all were part of the earliest first-class services.

That brings us up to that day at Promontory Summit in Utah in 1869. Rail travel was common from east coast cities to Chicago, albeit a bit rough. Most major waterways still had not been bridged, and track gauges still had



Directors of the Union Pacific (UP) in a luxurious private rail car during the construction of the railroad in 1868.